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A Brookings Forum

THROUGH THEIR EYES:

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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C O N T E N T S

Welcome and Introduction:

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Moderator:

STEPHEN HESS, Senior Fellow Emeritus
The Brookings Institution

Panel Discussion:

TAKASHI SAKAMOTO
Washington Correspondent
Yomiuri Shimbun

NADIA BILBASSY CHARTERS
Senior Correspondent, Al Arabiya

KARIN HENRIKSSON
Washington Bureau Chief
Swenska Dagbladet

CHRISTOPH VON MARSCHALL
U.S. Correspondent and Washington Bureau Chief
Der Tagesspiegel

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. NIVOLA: Good morning, everybody. I am Pietro Nivola. I'm the Director of Governance Studies here at Brookings which is the Research Division in which Steve has worked many decades, in fact, since I was a little kid it seems.

The mission of our Research Division is to study the performance of political institutions, and naturally that has to include the fourth estate, because the news media in any democracy are very much at the heart, they play a huge role, in shaping the political process and in setting the policy agenda. No one in Washington understands this better and has studied it more systematically over the years than my old friend Steve Hess.

The book we'll be discussing this morning is actually the sixth in a series that go all the way back to 1981. Steve has long been interested in a very basic concern, how media coverage influences public perceptions, or misperceptions I should often say, among different societies. Accordingly, one of Steve's earlier volumes dealt with the question of how the American media handle international news.

This new book is sort of the flip side of that question. It's perfectly titled, by the way, Steve, "Through Their Eyes" is just a wonderful title, and I'm very big on getting the title right. This one assesses how foreign correspondents cover us. As everybody knows, the

rest of the world views this country largely if not entirely through the kinds of lenses that the global media choose to apply. What are those lenses really like, and how do they actually work? These are the questions that Steve grapples with in a very hands-on way; I should say, in this very, very fine piece of work. It's also at the core of what our four panelists will be taking about today.

With that, I'd like to introduce our four distinguished guests and then turn things over to Steve. We had with us Nadia Charters who is the Senior Correspondent for Al Arabia; Karin Henriksson, the Washington Bureau Chief of the Swedish newspaper Swenska Dagbladet; Takashi Sakamoto of the Yomiuri Shimbun; and finally, Christoph von Marschall who is the Bureau Chief of Germany's Der Tagesspiegel.

With that, thank you all for joining us, and I'm going to turn it over to Steve.

MR. HESS: Thank you, Pietro. The writing of the book "Through Their Eyes" was the opportunity to have this conversation. This will not be a book review; it will not be a book critique. What I will be doing in our conversation is annotating the thoughts and the comments of our panel from other things that I found out on a grander scale. So it's not directly about "Through Their Eyes," I should tell you, of course, it's a remarkable book and you should read it. I'm teasing you. What is remarkable about it is that it had never been written before. Who foreign correspondents are, how they do their work and what they

produce is an increasingly question in this globe where information zips around in seconds.

Even though Pietro gave you a clue of who they are, I'm going to let them introduce themselves. That way we will be sure, they will be sure, that their name is pronounced correctly at least once. What I'm going to ask each one to do for 5 minutes so that we get comfortable with each other is tell us where they were born, what their parents did, where they went to school, how they got interested in journalism and what they did before they came here. Don't talk about being a foreign correspondent here. That we're saving for our conversation. This is an introduction.

I'm going to do it this way, and you start, I am.

MR. SAKAMOTO: I am Takashi Sakamoto. I am a correspondent of Japanese newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun, the Washington Bureau. Maybe I should start with the way I was born. I was born in Tokyo, Japan, and I have been raised in the Tokyo metropolitan area. I graduated from the University of Waseda, one of the private universities in Tokyo. By the way, I am 47 years old now. While I was the university, I was on the exchange program with the University of Oregon, so I have been in Eugene, Oregon, from 1978 to 1979. Then I couldn't transfer my credits from Oregon to Tokyo, so as a result I had to stay in my university for 5 years.

After I graduated I jointed Yomiuri Shimbun. In Japanese society it's kind of normal for someone who graduated from the university to get a job in a certain company and you will stay there in most cases for your lifetime. So I joined Yomiuri Shimbun in 1983. I have been with Yomiuri since then, so I have been a journalist for Yomiuri Shimbun for 22 years.

Then while I was in Yomiuri, in Japanese newspapers most of newcomers were assigned to the local bureaus in Japan, so I was assigned to the Shizuoka Bureau that is at the foot of Mount Fuji. I stayed there for 4 or 5 years. Then I came back to Tokyo at the headquarters office and then I experienced several things. Anyway, I was assigned to the International News Division and I went to India as a correspondent of the New Delhi Bureau Chief from 1990 to 1993. I covered whole South Asia including Afghanistan.

Then I came back to Tokyo and I worked as an economic correspondent, and so I covered the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Foreign Affairs for 2-1/2 years. Then I was assigned to Washington. That was my first Washington tour from 1996 to 2001.

I went back to Japan again and I worked as an editor on the International Desk. Then I came back to Washington from last year. So this is my second Washington tour.

MR. HESS: Nadia? Where were you born? I am Nadia.

MS. BILBASSY: I am Nadia Bilbassy. I was born in Gaza in Palestine. I stayed in Gaza until high school, and then I wanted to study medicine. Unfortunately, because of the political situation I couldn't because being from Gaza you can't study in the West Bank, it was given to priority to people carrying Jordanian passport. I couldn't go to Egypt because they had boycotted the Palestinian students after Sadat's assassination. I couldn't go to Western Europe because it was very expensive. I could go to Eastern Europe, but then it was very tricky because the PLO would give me a scholarship and it will be very difficult to go back and live in Palestine.

So I ended up doing nothing. I wanted medicine or nothing, and it was very difficult to negotiate with an 18-year-old. I think it's easier to negotiate with a terrorist at the time.

[Laughter.]

MS. BILBASSY: So I said to my parents, medicine or nothing; so actually I did nothing for a year, sort of nothing.

I ended up after that at Birzeit University because a friend of mine was there and he said come to Birzeit and try it. So I did go to Birzeit University and it was the best years of my life, actually, and Hanan Ashwari was my lecturer, and Marwan Barghouti was the head of the student union at the time. I got politically involved in the student activities, et cetera. I was a member of the Student Council and I ended up in Tunis representing the General Union of Palestinian Students. We

got arrested on the way back because there was contact at the time with an illegal organization.

Then the university was closed down by military orders of the Israelis, and you can never finish from that. So I ended up getting a scholarship and went to England. I did something, nothing to do really with what I experienced before; I did philosophy, psychology and literature. I graduated in 1987 from Bradford University in England. I went back to Gaza and I was a young graduate and I didn't really what to do. I was very lucky to get a job with the International Committee of the Red Cross, with ICRC, working as a translator for political detainees. I was mainly dealing with the Islamic Jihad, and Hamas was not really formed at the time yet. I liked the work, but it was office work and restricted me.

In December 1987 the first intifada broke out, and I loved being on the streets so I thought, brilliant, this is what I want to do. I'm ashamed to say it was the first for me really to be in the refugee camps. I had never been there before. I had no reason to be there. So I loved the work and I was very, very lucky to string for the French News Agency, Agence France Presse. Of course, in that year that I did nothing I did French, but it was not really counting. I worked for them in Gaza and then I moved to the Jerusalem office. I worked for them there covering the first intifada.

Then it was not challenging anymore because if you're familiar with the situation, Palestine is a very small place and you know everybody, you know your contacts, et cetera. So I ended up going to England to do my master's there and I wanted to look for adventure. So I went to Sri Lanka, and I worked in Sri Lanka for 4 years covering the civil war there, Tamil Tigers, traveling mainly in the north and east of the country. I worked for a British newspaper, The Independent, and then I worked for the IPS which is the Inter Press Service, a development news agency. It was a very sort of amazing experience really to be there in that part of the world with no connection, an Arab journalist ending up in Southeast Asia. I covered Southern India, the Malvides to a certain extent.

Then I ended up in West Africa in Senegal. I worked there as a free-lancer based in Dacca. At the time I had my daughter so I couldn't really work full-time. I covered a bit of Mali and Guinea-Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire. Then I ended up in Ethiopia. I was based in Ethiopia, and that was my first television experience. I covered the Horn of Africa for that time for MBC which is Middle East Broadcasting Corporation, or Center, rather. It was the first Arab satellite TV set up in London at the time, and I covered Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia. It was very interesting but it was very frustrating because of the understanding of news, especially for television. You are very limited in the access that you have.

Then I moved to Nairobi as the Bureau Chief for MBC again covering all of Africa, but I ended up concentrating on Somalia, covering Mogadishu zillions of times, and then Southern Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, South Africa and Zimbabwe. After is my best I will say time that I really spent as a correspondent there. In terms of access to the stories, in terms of finding your own stories, I'm very privileged to be able to cover Africa for 10 years for an Arab audience that was completely ignored before. We were relying on AFP and on Reuters and AP, and the first time that MBC realized that actually we need a correspondent to be there. I was there in a very interesting time, Kinshasa, military coups, the first election in Nigeria, elections in South Africa; many events.

Then Al Arabia was formed. It went on air actually 2 weeks before the war in Iraq, and Al Arabia and MBC are the same—MBC is our mother company for people who didn't know, actually. So they decided to have a 24-hour news station and they called it Al Arabia. They moved a few correspondents, I was one of them, and we worked for Al Arabia. I was asked to cover the Iraq war and I was embedded with the Marines in Kuwait.

Then after that I decided that I had taken enough risk in my life, I have two children, and it was very hard for me to carry on as a so-called war correspondent. I was looking for an office job, and Washington was one of the office jobs that was offered to me, so I took it. I ended up here and I have been here for the last 2-1/2 years.

MR. HESS: Thank you. Karin?

MS. HENRIKSSON: I am Karin Henriksson. That would be how we would pronounce it. It's Swedish. When I travel in the United States I kind of joke sometimes with Americans that I meet that I grew up in the Swedish South which is a little different. Even though Sweden is a small country, it's also divided up in regions. Actually, the region that I came from is where a lot of Swedes immigrated to the United States, but in my family we did not have anybody who did that.

I moved to Stockholm as soon as I could from this little place there where I grew up. I went to journalism school, I studied at university, and then I actually started working for Swenska Dagbladet already in 1974 which is a very long time. I was 21 at the time, I think, or 22.

I still think that working for a big newspaper is a really good experience because you can do anything there, and I did. I have had all possible jobs I think I've had there. I wanted to become a journalist because I like to write, I like words, and I also think it's a really good way of personal development, too, because you get to see a lot and you can visit factories, et cetera, and I find that really fascinating.

As I said, I worked for many various departments and I spent most of my time in Stockholm in the Economics Department which is another thing that's very educational, obviously, about society. I traveled a lot. I was on assignments in all sorts of countries. Then we opened up

a posting in Brussels, so I was there for a couple of years, and fell in love with an American and we moved here in 1987.

I did free-lancing of a couple of years and then eventually Swenska Dagbladet and some other newspapers. Then this job posting was open and I called and said can I apply, and they said yes, and that's the way it is, and I've been happy ever since. It's the best job you can have and we travel a lot and you learn a lot. So I'm very happy with that.

MR. HESS: Christoph?

MR. VON MARSCHALL: I'm Christoph Marschall with a name that's not so difficult. Christoph is like Christopher, and what marshals are in the United States you know. A little bit more difficulty is my newspaper, Der Tagesspiegel, but that just means just mirror of the day. It's the daily of the upper-class in Berlin, the business communities, political and diplomatic circles and so on. I'm with Der Tagesspiegel already since 1991, so after the fall of the wall.

Originally I come from the Southwest of Germany from Freiburg and Breisgau. My father taught law, international private comparative law, so he was several times in the United States. I also spent half a year in 1970-1971 here with him in Washington, D.C., but apart from that I had no English in school. I was brought up in the Classical way, Greek, Latin and some French.

I decided to go back for studies. My father taught at Frankfurt-am-Main where I was brought up and I went back to study in

Freiburg. I studied first forestry, then history and specialized in East European history in the 1980s. I went to Poland and studied there 1-1/2 years in 1983-1984. This was the time of martial law, food stamps and so on, and was also very educative for me.

I started journalism in the best time it could be for somebody who was specializing in Central and Eastern Europe in January 1989. Before I had already some experience with the local department in the towns where I studied. Just to earn a little bit of money I did some reporting of local stuff, and in 1989 I got a post with the Suddeutsche Zeitung, that is the biggest German daily apart from the "yellow press," the biggest German serious daily in Munich. In the summer of 1989 I went to Budapest, Hungary, where all the refugees were coming over the border. Then I reported on the changes in Romania, the fall of Ceauseseu, Bulgaria street demonstrations, and the first democratically elected government.

After 2 years with Suddeutsche Zeitung I decided I should go to Berlin because it was clear that Berlin was to become the capital again. It took much more time before the government moved than we thought. The Bundestag did the decision that they should move within 4 years, and it was 8 years after the decision that the government really move to Berlin. So maybe I went there a little bit too early, but there was no sense when you were in Berlin in the 1990s, it the most

fascinating German city of East and West coming together, also with the social problems and so on. So I'm very happy that I saw all that there.

I traveled again a lot to Central and Eastern Europe. Officially I was first in the News Department and then I was the Deputy Chief of the so-called Feature Department, but mainly I did reporting and commenting. We don't have this deep division like you know in the United States that you have the reporters and writers and editorial board and so on.

In 1995 I became the chief of the Editorial Page, and I did that for 10 years, still mainly traveling to Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, reporting on that. Then I went into security stuff, transatlantic relations, Russia, security problems and so on, and was several times in the United States with the USIS and other programs.

Since last August I am the U.S. correspondent and I'm mainly covering almost everything, the economy, of course, Motown and hurricanes and a little bit of culture and sports, but most of the time of the months I spent in Washington, D.C., but that's already the correspondents. I'll come to that later. I hope I didn't miss anything what you wanted to know.

MR. HESS: I'm going to annotate. The first annotation is to tell you that while I have chosen the panel and I have two women and two men, that is not the way the Washington foreign press corps is in fact. The Washington foreign press corps is 75 percent men and 25 percent

women, so this is not a representative sample. However, to put it in perspective, there are a lot of people who I call the irregulars who write quite regularly and importantly for the foreign press but have other jobs. They're particularly useful from my point of view because they do a lot more cultural reporting than the people on this panel who are here importantly for breaking news, diplomatic news and government news. That group tends to be about fifty-fifty men and women. So that's the first annotation.

Second, you see something that's interesting, and that is at least two of our four have had earlier experience in the United States as students, even in some cases high school exchange students. It is an interesting press corps in that about a third of the correspondents have had previous experience like that. We have of our four only one who studied journalism and that is not unusual. It is not a press corps that is comparable in some ways to the American press corps where perhaps up to a half would have studied journalism as an undergraduate as a graduate.

Other than that, the patterns are sort of interesting. The Japanese pattern as explained was to work themselves up through an organization and to that degree it's typical. Although what I heard here is a little unusual in that these are representatives of the traditional press corps who spend a limited time at one place, move on to the other place, although sometimes they get married and get stuck in a place. This is

less and less the pattern. In fact, the Japanese pattern, correct me if I'm wrong, is much more to send a person abroad for an assignment and then send them back and then they become the head of the diplomatic correspondents or the editor of the international section and so forth which has advantages and disadvantages. It means that back in Tokyo, that international section has people who have had experience with the world. On the other hand, they lose over time people like this who have been in India, come back, go on to the United States and so forth. There's sort of a richness that came with the original traditional sort of foreign correspondent.

What these people have, unlike other American correspondents, is at least if they report from places that are on the other side of the Pacific or Atlantic, their consumers and their editors are a lot of time zones removed from them which means that they either get up very early or stay up very late, and generally I've found that they do work harder at least in part than their American counterparts. To prove this or disprove this, I'm going to ask each one starting the same way around to tell us what they did yesterday from when they got up and their first input of information, the stories that they were working on, their contacts with their home office, to when they went to bed. It's not a typical day. I'm not asking you for a typical day because then you'll give me the day in which you worked 22 hours and barely got 2 hours of sleep. I'm asking about yesterday.

If it turns out that yesterday is very atypical, then I'll give you a little wiggle room to go beyond that. What was yesterday like?

MR. SAKAMOTO: Yesterday, I woke up around 7:30 or 8 o'clock and quickly checked my computer, my emails. Then I went down to my office a little bit before 9 o'clock because I knew that the White House was supposed to announce the report on the Katrina disaster.

We have six correspondents in my office and we rotate the morning shift. For us the morning shift means that we should watch the news by 11:30 a.m. because 11:30 a.m. is the final deadline for our morning paper in Tokyo. So if something happens by say at 11 o'clock, we are still before the deadline so we can work on the story. By the way, the first deadline for the morning paper is around 6 o'clock in the morning, so that means that you can have a lot of time to work on your story if you do not mind no sleep.

So I went to the office around 9 o'clock. I covered the Katrina report. Then I remained in the office to watch the news. After that I had a lunch appointment with one of the government officials. Then right after lunch I went to the Department of State because the State Department, there was a briefing from 1 o'clock yesterday in the State Department. I normally do not go to the State Department like every day, but I stopped by for the briefings maybe twice a week. Yesterday was something special because I knew that the State Department was going to announce they are going to have a meeting with the North Koreans in

March about their illicit activities like counterfeiting U.S. dollars. They have announced and I was there, and I wanted to ask a few questions during the briefing. So I went to the State Department and I listened to the briefing over there.

I came back to the office and I started calling some people to ask more questions about that North Korean meeting. For the Japanese press, the North Korean issue is very important. Of course, North Korea is the immediate neighbor and very unpredictable, and they are developing nuclear weapons. Moreover, we have so-called kidnapping issues with the North Koreans. So I thought it would be a very big news so I called a North Korean specialist. I called the North Korean U.N. representative office in New York. I was very lucky to talk with the North Korean Ambassador for a few minutes. Although he didn't give me anything very substantial, but it was very fortunate for me to be able to talk with the North Korean Ambassador.

I spent the afternoon mostly by calling the people regarding North Korean affairs. I started thinking about my story for the evening paper maybe after 5:30. Yomiuri Shimbun has just like other Japanese newspapers an evening edition and a morning edition. The first deadline of the evening edition comes around 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time. So first we have to file the stories for the evening edition maybe before dinner, and after dinner you are going to—we start writing the stories for the morning paper. The deadline comes, as I said, at 6 o'clock in the

morning. So I did the story of the North Korean talks for the evening paper first. Then I ate dinner at my office because I anticipated that I have to work on the morning paper story. So I ate some noodles in my office. Instant noodles, by the way.

After that I started working on the story about the North Korean meeting. It's more of an analytical piece for the morning edition, and I finished around midnight. I found still that we have, as I said, six correspondents, three of us were still in the office and I knew that one more was working at home. So four of us are still working after midnight. For me, maybe I should have done that a little bit earlier, but last night I was also watching TV for the female figure skating, and a Japanese athlete got the Gold Medal, so that's part of the reason I stayed late. But there is nothing to surprise that a Japanese journalist is working after midnight at the office.

So I went home say nearly 1 o'clock in the morning and I started reading Mr. Hess's book.

MR. HESS: Put you right to sleep didn't it?

[Laughter.]

MR. SAKAMOTO: I slept around maybe 4 hours last night. So that's my day.

MR. HESS: Are you married?

MR. SAKAMOTO: Yes, I'm married, but this time I left my family back in Japan, so I'm living on my own.

MR. HESS: It's an important point that we'll come back to. Nadia?

MS. BILBASSY: I got up at 6:30 and I normally read the newspapers, all the American newspapers, plus the Arab papers on the Internet. I was watching the news at 7 o'clock, I think; I think all of you are aware that yesterday was a very tragic day for Al Arabia. We lost three correspondents in Samarra in Iraq, and it was a hard day to cope with. So the first thing for us was to trying to find out what happened, for me to call the office and get the details of what happened to our correspondents and how they were kidnapped and killed eventually.

Then we're trying to get the reaction from the Americans to their deaths, and the first reaction we got was from the State Department. Actually I was scheduled to go to the State Department at 10 o'clock yesterday for a feature that I was doing about this Karen Hughes project of monitoring the Arab press. They set up this unit called the Rapid Response Unit in the State Department and they watch 24 hours everything that we do. So I'm a very familiar face. I thought I had fans in the Middle East, but I didn't realize people in the State Department were. They watch everything that we do.

So basically I phoned early and I said we need the reaction and they said, okay, fine, come, whatever. By the time that we sorted all the logistics, actually, it was already into 10-something. But we did get the reaction from two officials from the State Department and finished

my feature because I have to schedule filming that. I went back to the office and then we have to edit and send because the main deadline for us is 1 o'clock time here which is 10 o'clock in the Middle East, and that's prime time news bulletin. Everybody watches that.

So always for us everything has to be done before 12:30 or 1:30 because the other program is called Panorama which is like News Night which is basically you sum up what's happened during the day. For these two programs we have to do reports and get guests or do live shots, et cetera. So yesterday was not really typical because we are very busy with that. Then we had to do press releases, obviously, to most of the agencies of what's happened and considering that Al Arabia lost 11 correspondents now in Iraq which is the highest of all Arab and foreign media. And also I had to go and I'm talking on CNN International about the death of our correspondents, so that took part of my time.

Then I went back to office in meetings discussing what we're going to do after that and how we're going to respond. Then I have to edit the story, and by the time I finished it was like 6 o'clock. My kid is calling 10 times where are you, why aren't you at home by now?

But normally it's a typical day when we have to do everything before 12:00 and 1:00, but plus that, we have the disadvantage of the difference in hours. So we have 9 hours behind and, therefore, we have something called the Morning Show which is like Good Morning America or the Today Show. For this program I have to be in the office

at midnight, but luckily I do it once a week and yesterday was not the night, thank God. So otherwise I would have been working from morning until 1:00 a.m.

MR. HESS: Karin?

MS. HENRIKSSON: I usually get up at 6:30 in the mornings and read all the papers, watch the TV shows, and even though they tend to be less and less interesting I find, to me anyway it used to be that the Good Morning America and those shows, they used to do like 15 minutes serious news which was then the latest that it happened, and that's not true anymore I don't think.

Then they called me at 5 past 8:00 every morning and then we decide what we should do during the day, and obviously they wanted some kind of reaction from the President about the events in Iraq, so I did that.

I have basically two deadlines, one around 1 o'clock, and then we have another edition, and that's really the edition that the chief editor reads and the deadline is around 5:00 or 6:00. It depends. If there's something really big, we can slow the presses and all that. So I kind of work in two shifts. It's a news shift in the morning, and then it's more a feature shift in the afternoon.

Yesterday the unfortunate thing was—which is true so often for us—that we sometimes things happen after our deadline so we have to kind of restart the day. Then the worst thing really is when you have to

do the same thing over and over and over again for many editions is really ungrateful work. That's an aside point.

But yesterday as you may know or may not know, the Swede is the Chairman of the General Assembly in New York and yesterday he presented his proposal for a new Council for Human Rights in New York. I should have gone there but it isn't possible, so instead I watched the press conference on a webcast which is another new thing for us journalists. It's really fantastic. You have the press conference in your computer on your desk. And then you had the thing with the Swedish press afterwards so I talked to him because obviously that's a big story for us, a Swede who is appearing on the world stage in an important area, too. So I wrote that story.

Then I had another little feature thing. There was the friendship between Sweden and the United States, some descendant of a Swedish immigrant in the 1600s. He is making sure that some apple trees that his forefather planted will now be replanted in Sweden, so I talked to him on the phone.

[Laughter.]

MS. HENRIKSSON: Then I just got back from a trip to Sweden so I've had this many newspapers to read which I think is important to go through because that's another thing, I think here in America, if you're away for like a week you've kind of lost a lot of momentum, so I really try to read the newspaper when I get back.

Then it's the usual evening, watching the news shows and some C-Span maybe, and eating dinner and then it's bed.

MR. VON MARSCHALL: I also try to get up every morning at 6:00. Yesterday I managed, but my wife would hate to tell you why, because she forgot to load her cell phone so the alarm of the cell phone was ringing that the battery is low and that is why I got up at 6:00 yesterday in the morning.

[Laughter.]

MR. VON MARSCHALL: At 6:30 normally that's the latest, then the NPR news I'll listen and I'm still in the bedroom. And I really have to get up, grab all the newspapers outside. I'm working at home; I'm not working in an office, so I have just to turn on my computer, read the mail and have an overview of the headlines. I always read already or try to get an overview of the American newspapers in the evening before. I click every evening at 10:00 or 11:00 on the Internet and just read the headlines of The Washington Post, The New York Times, that I am aware of what can happen tomorrow morning, because at 7:30 my newspaper would call me it was clear what I would have to do yesterday because the evening before Joschka Fischer was in town, the former Foreign Minister. He had a discussion with Zbigniew Brzezinski at the International Center for Strategic and International Studies on K Street, and that was his first performance as an elder statesman in the U.S. after the change of the

government, so it was clear I was have to write some sort between feature and news.

But finally also the Tagesspiegel decided that they will print for today's newspaper the New Orleans story. I was last week in New Orleans how the city is preparing for the first Mardi Gras after Katrina, how the city looks like and so on. So I was under a certain time pressure because I have only time until 11:00 in the morning to do everything for the newspaper and 5:00 is the deadline for the first edition in Berlin, 6:00 if it's a front page, but for this news story it was 5:00, so 11:00 here. So first I had still to do a little bit of work on this feature on how New Orleans is preparing, and then I had to write the story about Joschka Fischer and his discussion with Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Apart of that I tried later in the day to organize the next trips. I'm going to Arizona for two reasons, a cowboy story when the movie Brokeback Mountain comes into the German theaters by mid-March and I want to use the opportunity also to go down to the border and the Minutemen, the civil defense corps and try to get on a border patrol with a border guard. It's a little bit difficult to organize that because you are sending emails and calling people and saying promises that, yes, they help you, but then you get no answer and it's difficult to find the right person, and if you do it too late then they will tell you, if you had told me earlier. So I'm a little bit out of time pressure to do that.

Also in the afternoon I had a meeting with former U.S. Ambassador to Germany Daniel Coats. We postponed it to a certain time. You know that he was very busy with the nomination of the Supreme Court candidates. He trained, if you want to say so, Harriet Miers and later Samuel Alito. Now he had a little bit more time so we met and talked a little bit about coming back for him from Germany to the U.S. And in the evening there was a briefing at the National Press Club about border control and the impact with security. This was this time important for me or I thought at least it should be important for me as I planned this trip to Arizona.

Then apart of that in the afternoon I had to do some organization of the bureau, also look through the newspapers that are coming from Germany. And I also the one who has to do the shopping, but that comes later as I understand, so I don't talk too much to how is the share of labor between my wife and me.

MR. HESS: We could get onto something a little like there is a phenomenon called the trailing spouse and it can happen to diplomats and others who go around. It's, excuse me, but I've just been transferred to Brussels and the spouse, which doesn't have to be a woman but more often is, says, but I'm a lawyer or I'm a doctor. What am I going to do in Brussels? And so forth. So it is a problem in many cases.

You married an American, right?

MS. HENRIKSSON: My situation is quite tragic, actually, if I talk about it. My husband was English. He was killed in a plane crash in a hijacked airplane in Ethiopia and crashed in the Comoros Islands in 1996. So I carried on from 1996 until now with two kids. My kids were 2 and 4 at the time, and so I'm a single mother, I'm a widow. I do a full-time job, I do all the shopping and all the bills and all the school meetings and everything else alone. But it's amazing how much you can do when you realize that you have no option.

MR. HESS: Life is complicated for these people who work obviously very hard. At least I've made the first point that they do indeed work very hard.

There was a correspondent from The Telegraph who created something called the Barber axiom which was happiness is in direct proportion to distance from the home office. It sounds as if technology has made distances pretty short. We talked about meeting at 8 o'clock and so forth. It did strike me from my studies that different countries kept their reporters on longer or shorter leashes. For instance, the French from my study turned out to be on the shortest leash, that is, Paris was more interested in what they would be reporting the next day than perhaps Berlin was.

Talk a little bit about this question of the world being so connected that you're in constant touch with wherever your headquarters is. What's the relation between Tokyo and Washington in this regard?

MR. SAKAMOTO: I think that our relation with the leaders in Tokyo, we are on a shorter leash, frankly speaking, especially the last several years because of the development of the Internet. Even if you in Tokyo, you can get most of the public information from the United States. To be very frank, I think that someone in Tokyo with some proper knowledge about the United States can write 80 percent of the stories published in our international news page, frankly speaking. So I was on the International News Desk until last year, so I was the one who told my colleagues in Washington you should cover this, why you don't write about this, so I was told the same thing since after I came here.

Of course, sometimes I tell my editors in Tokyo that you don't have to do this or this is my story, you should use this, that I reserve the right to discuss what we are going to write, of course. So it's a kind of two-way street.

But always my editors try to intervene my work so I have to sometimes defend or I have to sometimes oblige to obey their order. If you get a phone call from Tokyo at 2:30 in the morning and if you know that your editor is kind of desperate to do something, you might have to accept his proposal.

MR. HESS: We don't have to go around in that order. Anybody can jump in. In Europe, of course, your editors have read The New York Times 6 hours before you wake up haven't they?

MR. VON MARSCHALL: They could have.

[Laughter.]

MR. HESS: They could have.

MR. VON MARSCHALL: Here's the problem. The United States are so important that there's news about the United States everybody around every day and that is the reason, and they have, as you say, this time advantage. Six hours earlier than me they start to work, they start to read, they start to discuss what are the subjects and they think that they know what it's about, but it is really a big difference. There are a lot of misperceptions and especially the misperceptions when it comes to emotional issues like the death penalty, the war in Iraq, the climate protocol and so on. So they have this perception that they know in Berlin as well as you would know here in Washington, D.C., and they could tell me what I should write about it or which spin it should have or what is the crucial question.

There it occurs to me, of course, I have a different perception because I'm living in different circumstances, in different discussion networks and so on. I am reading much more of the U.S. press and the colleagues in Germany are much more—they deal with the German newspaper perception of what is happening in the United States. When they are calling me, they are not calling me because The Washington Post or The Los Angeles Times, they well call me, but Suddeutsche Zeitung put it that way, why don't we have that, or Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung did this and this. Or the German

television, haven't you seen yesterday the interview with the person ABC? And often these are not so important persons, but they formed the perception in Germany which is the next problem. It's very difficult for foreign correspondents even from a country like Germany to get to high-level officials in the United States. I had my interview with the Secretary of State, but I had it back in Germany when he visiting Germany. I would probably never get a one-to-one interview with the Secretary of State here, and I'm not talking about the President. I don't even get a White House press pass. Normally foreign correspondents don't get that.

So this is the main problem, that perceptions are different and you have somehow to deal with that. I'm in a lucky position because when I came here I had already before a senior position in my newspaper and I know the colleagues there. I am not a traveling correspondent who visits his newspaper every few years, but mainly live outside. I've worked with this newspaper for the last 15 years. I could tell you, give me a subject, what the discussion is, who would say what on, I don't know, French domestic policy today in a conference and what would be the culture argument of another colleague and so on. I know those people and they know me, so that makes it a little bit easier to deal with it, but that's very different from other colleagues.

MR. HESS: I want to back to our one TV correspondent here and particularly because of something that's been called the CNN effect,

and CNN and cable is on, and suddenly as a Spanish wire service correspondent said, they call and say there's a car chase in Indiana and you have to say who cares, or you say, do you know how long it will take me to get to Indiana?

Do you have particularly in television that, because CNN and Fox and all the others have a U.S. slant, how does that effect you?

MS. BILBASSY: We do actually very much so because satellite TV is they monitor each other, not just the Arab media but also the foreign media. So constantly in our news room in Dubai we have probably 100 screens, so 24 hours you're going to watch us, you're going to watch Al Jazeera, you're going to watch CNN, you're going to watch Fox, you're going to watch BBC World, and you monitor what's happening on these screens all the time. So especially when there's breaking news, you're always obliged to find out who broke it first and how you're going to follow it up, et cetera.

We don't follow the little stories with the car chase, thank God, but today, for example, was the breaking news of the attack on the Saudi oil field, and I think Al Arabia broke, I saw it also on Al Jazeera, and then CNN took it from us, actually. So there is a tendency to be influenced about what's on the news and what makes the news.

The fact that we are 9 hours behind, or they are actually ahead of us, then they have the chance to see what's happening. In our office they have the tendency to follow the print media as well, very

much influenced by what's happened on the front page of The Post and The Times. Very often we have a proposal from Dubai to say, can you follow this story because it's a front-page news story in The New York Times?

We also influence things in the way that we give them the stuff that they cannot see from there. As you said, it is a global village and they can see everything. All the information that I have, they have, and probably before me. Before I leave the White House briefing, they already know what's happening because it's already on the wire and they can see it. Sometimes are proposed stories that they cannot see, and these are the human interest stories, the cultural stories, the things that I think can bring cooperation between the West and America.

But also I mean in general I think my editors are very fair and objective in terms of coverage, but sometimes they tend to fall into this conspiracy theory approach of everything like the Foreign Press Center has organized a trip for us to go, for example, somewhere, and they'll say like why? What's the motive? What do they want? Be careful that you don't get their side of the story. Make the story balanced. So it's laughable sometimes, but they are sort of away from you and they don't know really what's happening on the ground. So this is one thing.

Access is we are extremely lucky because being on Arab media you are sort of the sexy thing, everybody wants you because, I mean, keep on invading other people's countries so you have Iraq, you

have Afghanistan, you have the war on terror, so all the time they want this. And it works both ways, so when the Presidents wants to say something, they are happy to call us, and actually he's given us three interviews so far, unlike you. Sorry.

[Laughter.]

MR. VON MARSCHALL: We are not TV. You are TV. That is clear.

MS. BILBASSY: It's TV, exactly, and it's the same for the Secretary, so we have access to them. The only people they don't give us access and they hate us and they lump us all together is the Pentagon and Rumsfeld, so Jazeera, Arabia, whatever, they're all the same, work with the insurgents, hate them, don't want to talk to them.

MR. HESS: I wanted Karin to jump in on this because we started with Christoph on access, too. As the representative of the smallest country on our riser today and quote from a French Canadian who said, if you can't prove that actual, real, important American voters read your stuff, you might as well be a potted plant. How is it in terms of access from a small country that we're not counting on to balance or trade deficit?

MS. HENRIKSSON: A good question. I agree with Christoph, it's really difficult here in Washington, but there are tricks. You can go to events, and what you need as a newspaper reporter is really only one or two or three quotes. And obviously, Americans in

general are very accessible and like to talk. So in a way if you really need something, you can get it, not the President, of course.

Then if you travel in the country you can almost meet anybody, so I think it's a two-way street, that you can't expect to get access here, you learn how to operate around it and then maybe if you do what is news, you can also ask. And these days when everything is available, then maybe the role of the correspondent is to explain more what America is. Then I did a story earlier this week about the changes in Bush's foreign policy. Then you don't need to talk to anybody in a way you could say, you do, of course, but that's the kinds of stories you have to work on, too.

MR. HESS: What has become clear, too, from this group as would be any four foreign correspondents is the degree to which they are news junkies, that they wake up listening, reading news, and they do it all through the day. What we know from surveys, of course, is that they most read The New York Times and The Washington Post partly because they're mostly in Washington and New York, but other reasons, the importance of those two papers. There are some who would say that that has a certain liberal position. Since the question is borrowed news, and I read a piece in the London Sunday Times the other day, a Cheney story, and it was an honest piece in that it cited its sources, but every source was a publication. There is a saying that says, you're only as good as your local paper for foreign correspondents. Do you feel any particular

pulls and tugs, anybody can answer this question, by what you read and the fact that it is The New York Times and The Washington Post?

MS. HENRIKSSON: Can I say one thing on that topic? That is something that's also pretty new I think and has to do with the way the electronic world or the electronic instruments we have today are changing things. I've noticed I get a lot of emails which is new, of course. It's nice to have that kind of contact with the readers, but you can detect that there are sort of campaigns going on. You can say that there is a sort of worldwide maybe conservative movement that's been very strong. So if you write something that they don't like, you can get like five emails with the same content, and that is interesting what's happening internationally.

MS. BILBASSY: I think in the Arab world, in a democracy, of course, you have free press, we don't have it in the Arab world, and we're moving slowly towards that direction. But it's understandable that you're going to have even in the independent newspapers they have leanings so they can have their own point of view.

But until I came to America, I realized that the word liberal is viewed in a negative sense and such a dirty word, just like liberal. And I've never seen that in Europe, for example. You read a certain newspaper, you can read The Guardian and The Observer and you maybe can read The Sunday Times and The Telegraph, but such identified with two camps.

So for me I think I don't see really The Post and The Times as liberal leaning as such. I have found them fair in terms of their coverage, objective, and they give more—maybe even the FT has the best foreign coverage, actually, but at least they satisfy me in terms of when I look, although I wanted to see more [inaudible] as opposed to having opinionated news articles in The Washington Times or maybe The Wall Street Journal to a certain extent. So they do influence, yes, but I don't really put that label on them clearly as left and right, liberal and conservative.

MR. HESS: I'm going to cut to the quick. The question is, anti-Americanism. You wanted to jump in on that before we go into anti-Americanism?

MR. VON MARSCHALL: Yes, I would like to. There is a big danger when you're a correspondent in the United States. Normally you live in Washington, most of them, or you live in New York or you live in Los Angeles. Normally you talk to Americans if you talk to Americans who are open to the world, who are interested, who are Democratic leaning. So this is the big problem, when you are then only reading The New York Times and The Washington Post, you are right, they are fair in a journalistic way, but still they are rather on that side than on the [inaudible] side or on the South Dakota conservative side would try to override now Roe v. Wade or something like that. So this is really a big danger.

So I tell everybody, and I do it myself, read at least The Washington Times, that you get the quotes from Republicans that you understand how they are. Try to travel as often as possible from Washington to the Midwest. Talk to people there. Read the local newspapers not every day, but when you are there. Because when you get American perception just through the eyes of The Washington Post and The New York Times, then it will please your editors in Europe and a lot of your readers, but probably you get it 50 percent wrong.

MR. HESS: Let me add to that in this sense. Twenty years ago when I did the first studies on this, the travel of foreign correspondents, again from New York and Washington, was almost entirely costal, the West Coast, the East Coast, and to major cities. I've found this time when I did the same thing that correspondents are much more likely to get into smaller cities, even smaller towns in the United States. Possibly it's because of airline deregulation, it's cheaper to go, possibly in television it's because of miniaturization, you don't have to take as much equipment and so forth, but it's a much more balanced picture of the United States. It can't be too balanced, this is the capital, New York is the U.N. and Wall Street and so forth, there's reasons for them to be there, but there is a greater attempt I think to see; as you say, you're going to Arizona next week for example. That's good.

A reporter interviewing me yesterday about what I was most surprised about after doing this study, and I thought a moment and said,

"They like us. They like us." They even say we're nice. At a time that many Americans don't like Americans don't think we're nice, I have found a group of people that by and large, that doesn't mean they like our policies or other—

[End Tape 1-A. Begin Tape 1-B.]

MR. HESS: —but they like us, that if there's any message from the book and importance to these people from the United States point of view, given the vitriolic coverage that you see around the world, the foreign correspondents in the United States tend to be a modifying influence on that, I think, maybe for the reasons that they know things and nuances that their editors don't. On the other hand, the counterinfluence that we talked about is the degree that the leash is shorter at the same time.

Tell us from your country's point of view what they're thinking about the United States, what their biggest misconceptions are, what you have to work against or if their conceptions are right. All the stereotypes are not necessarily wrong. Start there for Japan.

MR. SAKAMOTO: I think that in Japan the anti-Americanism is not so serious as the rest of the world. Generally speaking, people like the United States and the Americans. Of course, there are quite a sizable number of people who don't like President Bush or the way the Bush administration behaves, especially in the Iraq war.

But generally speaking, the public sentiment is they tend to like the United States.

But I can find something missing in their perception. For instance, why the United States always advocates freedom and democracy. Probably most of the Japanese people think that, well, they are just saying it to make an excuse for their intervention into other countries. But my personal observation is that Americans really mean it. They might be naive, but they really love democracy and freedom and they want to advocate it in the world.

But that kind of perception I don't think my readers do not share all the time. So it's kind of hard to convey what Americans are really feeling or thinking about especially some certain core values of the American society like freedom or democracy.

MR. HESS: Are there more important questions for you?

MS. BILBASSY: In the Middle East, absolutely. I think anti-Americanism is the wrong term, really, because it should be anti-American foreign policies. Because if you take any surveys in the Middle East, there is one recently done by a think tank in Jordan and despite the height of anti-Americanism or foreign policy in the region, every single time the question was asked, which country would you like to migrate to, which country would you like to seek medical treatment, which country would you like to live in, which country would you like to

study, every single time the United States came on top despite everything.

So the problem in the Middle East is actually people appreciate what America stands for. They see it as a fair society. They see it as a decent society, a society that gives you a chance to flourish. You can be an immigrant, you can be a Japanese American, an Arab American or whatever American, Latino American, but actually you have a system that allows you to go through the courses of reaching the top job in the office. Therefore, these opportunities might not necessarily have even in Western Europe and you'll still be viewed as a Pakistani British or a Senegalese French and whatever. So there is that held idea in the Middle East that actually America is a wonderful society.

And you can add into this from my own personal experience that you can see little things that people don't see like, for example, when I went to Crawford to cover the Sharon-Bush meeting and I missed my plane so I finally find out only one seat so my cameraman couldn't make it and I ended up alone. I have tons of television equipment, editing stuff, like 300 kilos worth of stuff. I arrived in Waco, a tiny little airport, alone, and I have to find a map and drive and find my way in Texas, and let alone in Washington. The person who helped me was a Texan police officer who said to me, wait, ma'am, here, I'll get you everything. He got the woman from the renting company to get my car and loaded my stuff. I was touched by the decency of people from all

over the United States. You'll find good people all over the world, but particularly here. And the image in America actually that this is an aggressive society, that is a country that is imperialist who want to invade the rest of the world has only manifested itself in policies. And when it comes to policies, of course, there are big issues there. The United States has always been perceived as supporting Israel, a key ally of Israel. Now we have the war in Iraq, Afghanistan, we have Guantanamo, we have Abu Ghraib, and then democracy and freedom that they want to advance in the world, but then the record doesn't match because we've seen what happened in Latin America, we've seen the support for dictatorships in the Middle East whether they are small dictators or big dictators where on the expense of democracy they wanted stability.

So people can see this difference and, therefore, I think the media reflects what people feel and you cannot separate that. So in general when you have coverage of the war in Iraq, you're going to be critical. It's not just you're talking about casualties daily. You're not going to talk about the one different school that opened there. You're going to talk about the 60 people who died today. I'm sorry that people don't see it anymore, but on a daily basis there are people dying and it has to make headline news. And you're going to talk about the motives of going into Iraq, why you launched the war. You're not going to forget that. So there is demand daily. Then the threat against Iran and Syria, so

it's all linked into actually what the administration really viewed in the region.

But on top of that there is also a negative view of the Americans because they've been seen in the world as very ill-informed, they really don't know what's happening outside the world. You can go back to jokes about Bush about naming Musharraf, or Americans thought Noriega or what's his name, at that time in Nicaragua, Ortega was like a Mexican food or all these kinds of things. If you want to be a superpower, at least you need to be informed what's happening around the world. So these kinds of things, yes, people think they don't know, they elected somebody like Bush, they talk about the Red States, they talk about Jesusland, all these kinds of stereotypes actually plays very well in the Middle East and fits into the picture that this great society, they can go up to the moon, they can do all these great scientific discoveries, but they cannot locate Iraq on a map, for example.

So it's a love-hate relationship, and it's a confused picture in a way, but it's mainly fundamentally disagreeing on foreign policy and really loving what America stands for.

MR. HESS: Karin, there's a slight difference when we get to the question of Sweden that came out a bit in your telling us what you did yesterday, for example, and that is the immigrant experience. You get more, I gather from my own book, of the local angle coming, obviously requested from Stockholm and Helsinki and Bergen and what have you,

but that sense that people, the Scandinavians came here, they became successes here and so forth and so on. That's part of the story, too, isn't it?

MS. HENRIKSSON: Yes, it is. We shouldn't maybe exaggerate that, but of course, that is a sort of historic America as a superpower and then it's bilateral relations maybe. And then if we are talking about what kind of news you can find ourself, borrowed, news-news, there is all sorts of news, and obviously an American newspaper would not report on some event in bilateral relationships. Obviously that news you can find yourself. Then maybe, yes, I think that there is an interest in Sweden in Swedes who have succeeded in America and what they think. Some of them write to me, too, and they can't understand the anti-American feelings in Sweden, actually.

MR. HESS: It's interesting to the degree that people don't win Pulitzer Prizes or the equivalent on these stories about a person who has struck it rich or in some cases won the lottery and what-not, but nobody else is writing them if you don't write them and people care about them, and there's a difference in how newspapers treat them. Some newspapers in some countries are far too cosmopolitan to worry about the immigrant experience you'll find, but nevertheless, it's an interesting part. Continue with your anti-American response, Christoph.

MR. VON MARSCHALL: I think you are very right with your approach that probably the presence of foreign correspondents adds

to a positive correction of the picture of the United States. The rule I found when I look at the German colleagues is some of them would report very critically or even negatively about the United States, but if you talk to them privately, then they will love America much more than it turns out in their pieces. And it's obviously the same when you talk to people who were earlier here, correspondents, and you would find them with very critical positions about Bush and the war and whatever, but when you ask them about their experience, there would be a smile on their face, the best years I ever spent was my time in Washington, D.C., and so on.

Of course, if you talk to people about anti-Americanism, nobody wants to be accused that he is anti-American. He will then say, no, no, I am not anti-American, I'm anti-Bush. But there is this danger that one turns into the other. Of course, they liked Clinton very much and they could forgive Clinton even that he was against the Kyoto Protocol, but there is still these demon pictures behind American business philosophy, it is very negative, you have only McDonald's jobs and nobody has Social Security here and we are to all these respects much better in Germany. People would admit, of course, that it has changed a lot when it comes to racist questions, but nevertheless they would believe that there is a huge discrimination of blacks in the United States, probably much higher than in Germany against immigrants which is probably not true.

But America is a superpower with all its values where you always have to work on it that you are morally not worth—you try always to maybe we don't have the power to do all those military things and we Germans, first of all don't want to do that, but we are morally on a higher ground. It is deeply disturbing that it turns now out that Secret Servicemen were in Baghdad during the campaign and were even giving the coordinates of targets to the Americans. What should they have done instead? Give it to the Iraqis and not prevent American deaths in Baghdad? So it's so difficult with this being against the war, but on the other hand not trying to be part of this war and working against all what appears to be bad.

But generally you are right, I think the presence of the correspondents is rather a positive correction of the picture, but still the pieces of those correspondents wouldn't show how much they like America because they are under this pressure from their home media and the home media generally speaking, if it's a left or liberal or right media in Germany, you can be sure that probably the home media is more critical about the United States than the correspondent here, and that is a daily pressure.

MR. HESS: Let me ask one last question that I always ask my students at George Washington University to ask when they go out and do interviews, what have I left out? What question should I have

asked? Any final word? We have a few minutes for the audience to have questions, but if anybody would like to, you don't have to.

MS. BILBASSY: It's fine to see, actually, you're a good journalist. I'm trying to think of any questions you haven't asked us.

MS. HENRIKSSON: I might trick myself.

MR. HESS: We'll go on to the questions from the audience. We have about 10 minutes. This is all going to be transcribed. It will be on the Brookings website within a couple of days, so I would appreciate it if everybody would identify yourselves in such a way that we can get it on the transcript.

MR. MIYAZAWA: Thank you. My name is Mike Miyazawa. My question is about the cartoons. My question is how you reported the U.S. reaction to this incident and has your reporting been accepted or rejected by your editors back there?

MR. HESS: The reporting from the U.S. position on the cartoons, since that's where they come from. Do you want to start?

MR. SAKAMOTO: Actually, I personally did not write a story about that, but our newspaper reported that issue as a kind of diplomatic issue between the Arab world and the Western world. And the Japanese are not so much religious people, as you may know, so we treat it as a kind of diplomatic news.

MS. BILBASSY: For TV we need people to talk, obviously, to react on what they say, and I think we reported what they said which

basically is the State Department came out to say that it slightly was interpreted as a pro-Arab stand in terms of you cannot offend other people's religion, but while we defend the freedom of expression. Then I reported when King Abdullah came and had a meeting with President Bush and they concentrated actually on that cartoon thing and what the President said and the appeal for violence, et cetera, for calm and peace. So I think the U.S. stand was trying as much as they can to stay away from the controversy because it's enough they had with the things that had gone on, and we reported objectively I would say.

MR. HESS: It would be interesting for a Scandinavian.

MS. HENRIKSSON: They covered it totally from Copenhagen, from the Arab world, so I'm not sure even of the American reaction is going to fit into that. But obviously the to-do list is do a story eventually on Arab Americans which would be interesting for the Swedish readership I think.

MR. VON MARSCHALL: I think there were two or three very surprising points. First of all, the reporting started much earlier in Germany than it started here, 3 to 4 days earlier and also commentaries and so on. Second, we were very much surprised that the American newspapers took such a cautious standpoint on it, that at least in the first week, everybody was almost only accusing this newspaper how could they dare to publish such cartoons. For us it turned out very quickly that this was a campaign, that it was misused by Islamic countries and Islamic

media, and so we took a very firm standpoint defending—we said it might be a bad caricature, it might be not for the right aims, but we would always defend the right to publish such a caricature, and we did it also to prove it. We took one of those caricatures and printed ourselves. Then our own caricaturist became for another caricature in that he was the target of a lot of emails and threats and so on. He had to move out of our office building for a few days because of that.

But Germany was surprised that American didn't take a clear standpoint, yes, that is a question of freedom of speech and you should always defend the right, even if you think that's a bad caricature.

MR. HESS: Karin, did your paper reproduce the cartoon?

MS. HENRIKSSON: No, we did not, and apparently the topic was discussed because we have some cooperation with the Jyllands Posten, the newspaper in the case, and they decided, no, we don't really—because you have freedom of the press doesn't mean that you exercise it in that way. I think that that's the American stand.

MR. HESS: And I gather from our discussions that you didn't print the cartoon either.

MR. SAKAMOTO: No, we didn't.

MR. HESS: Next question?

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you. Gary Mitchell from The Mitchell Report. I want to ask a question about your media habits, and in a large context, what I'm really interested in is to whom or to what do

you listen or what do you read other than The New York Times, The Washington Post, what I would call sort of traditional sources? Let me steer you in a direction. I'm interested in how many of you watch Jon Stewart, how many of you listen to Imus in the Morning or talk radio.

MR. HESS: Want to start over here?

MR. SAKAMOTO: Actually, I personally do not listen to the talk radio so much, and probably the same for my colleagues. Besides The New York Times and The Washington Post, that of course we are subscribing to a lot more American newspapers, but I don't have much enough time to read all of them every day. I try to take a look at the headlines of each paper. And plus that we are subscribing to some newsletter services especially for the East Asian news, there is a newsletter service called the Naosung Report [ph]. It's kind of part gossip, part hard news, but sometimes it gives us very good information to work.

MS. SAKAMOTO: Don't get us wrong. I'm not saying that we're using The Post and The Times as a guide or as an influence as such, but for me personally I read everything. I have to because I read from the extreme left to the extreme right. So in addition to the two papers that I have, I have The Washington Times delivered to my house as well, so I read that in the morning. And we also get suggestions from The Wall Street Journal when we see a story and they said can you follow it up and do it? Unfortunately, I have to admit I listen to Fox, or watch it,

actually. Sometimes I find it very irritating and extremely—makes you really angry, especially with the O'Reilly show, but I do watch it. And I do listen to NPR. I'm a very strong fan of NPR. I listen to it all the time. Imus in the Morning, sometimes I find it offensive and racist, so I don't really listen to it.

MS. HENRIKSSON: The same story. I try to read as much as I can, all sorts of it, and I subscribe to millions of magazines and I really at least try to look through them because you pick up little things. I also try to read particularly if there's one of these stories like the Harriet Miers nomination or the effort to nominate her, to read the websites of various groups so get the full picture.

MR. VON MARSCHALL: The same, using traditional sources, and there's a lag of time, you'll almost every day find yourself in the position that you should have read that, that, that, or watched that, that, that, and listened to that on that radio station, and you just don't manage to.

MR. HESS: I should add one other thing to their reading habits which would not have been true of an earlier generation of foreign correspondents because they didn't have the Internet, and if they got papers from their country, they would come 3 weeks too late, the degree to which they read the press in their own countries or their own parts of the world which is a very interesting thing, so they have a rather immediate connection. You talked about the opposition papers earlier as

well. So this is something new that's added to the mix of what correspondents read which my earlier studies 20 years ago would not have shown.

Is there a question back in the corner?

MR. GROSS: My name is Joshua Gross [ph]. I'm with the Embassy of Afghanistan. My question is, for the various correspondents' respective countries or regions, are there any hot-button issues that they feel their American counterparts universally reporting in the Middle East or in Asia or in Europe and tend to just get wrong, they have a limited understanding of the matter for some reason or another. And if so, are you ever able to correct their inappropriate sometimes interpretation of what you feel is the actual way to be reporting on a particular issue?

MS. BILBASSY: I think I will say that the foreign coverage in general has been poor and it's after 9/11 that you see interest in the Arab and Muslim world, maybe the world at large and writing in detail about it and sending correspondents there. And now you see the big papers having correspondents in Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo, et cetera. But before that I don't think there was that great interest in the Middle East, or at least I'm talking about in my area.

But also, you have to consider the circumstances. We're talking about undemocratic regimes and, therefore, access is not like in a free country where you can go and talk to people without having a minder following you all over the place, or you have actually access to somebody

from the government. So access is respected, and also the fact that, I don't know, foreign correspondents being very few veterans, you can name them and they've always been an Arabist and they've been in Beirut or Cairo for the last 30 or 40 years. So I think things have changed now greatly, but still there are so many obstacles of covering from the region backwards.

MR. HESS: We're passed our time I'm sorry to say. We have one hand up. Let's have one final question. Please go ahead.

MR. MILLIKEN: Al Milliken, Washington Independent Writers. Have you all written about religion or have any of you deliberately avoided that? I'm particularly interested if any of you have written about what is described here as the culture wars or the influence of religion on politics and in the battles in the courtroom.

MS. HENRIKSSON: Yes, I've written a lot about that. I've been to megachurches and I've written about the difference in attitudes about religion in America, and also the roles of the courts which is maybe something that a foreign audience doesn't always understand.

MS. BILBASSY: We did a report on it actually. During the election it came very much in focus because we talked about the Red States and how America votes and how the evangelical right has influenced to a certain extent the elections in America. So it's been in focus and people are aware of it outside as well.

MR. SAKAMOTO: I always have some kind of difficulty to explain about the nature of the abortion issue in the United States. It's very difficult to explain to Japan that we do not share the same religious background so we have to start from the beginning of the issue and try to explain to Japanese readers, but still I'm not so successful about that.

MR. HESS: What a terrific panel. How much we got out of this. You never know what was going to happen when you open your mouth, but we got some interesting, interesting insights into the way you do business, and we at Brookings are very grateful for you to come here and join with us. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]
[END OF RECORDED SEGMENT.]